

SB 296 - Election Law - Campaign Finance - Protect

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February 4, 2021

Testimony on SB 296
Election Law - Campaign Finance - Protection of Contributor Information
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 296 which would protect Maryland contributor information made available on campaign finance reports or statements from commercial solicitation and published in print materials intended for commercial solicitations.

Access and transparency is particularly necessary for our State Board of Elections (SBE), who oversee the process most fundamental to our democracy: elections. Currently, campaign finance reports filed with SBE are maintained in an electronic storage format widely and easily accessible to the public. This transparency ensures voters know who and what entities are funding candidates. It also ensures contributors are able to verify that their donations are reported.

As we continue to advance reforms like public financing of elections throughout the state which will increase the contributions being made by individuals, taking steps to ensure their information is protected will help in efforts to encourage greater participation. If Marylanders do not have faith that their information will be properly secured, that interaction will slow – robbing citizens of valuable services and opportunities and robbing the government of legitimacy.

Marylanders must be able to trust that the State Board of Elections will be a dependable custodian of their contributor information. Because SB 296 helps to protect that trust while continuing to advance the values of transparency in our election, we recommend a favorable report.

SB296_StateBoardofElections_support_JaredDeMarinis

Uploaded by: DeMarinis, Jared

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Maryland State Board of Elections

SB 296 – Senator Simonaire Election Law - Campaign Finance - Protection of Contributor Information

Purpose:

To prohibit the use of contributor information for commercial solicitations.

Comments:

The State Board of Elections supports this legislation.

Recently, the State Board of Elections has received numerous questions regarding the use of the contributor information on the campaign finance reports. These inquiries focused on whether the publicly available, online contribution information of an individual may be used for commercial solicitations by a vendor.

As you are aware, the State Board of Elections is required to make campaign finance reports easily accessible to the public. The reports are necessary for voters to make informed voting decisions regarding who is funding political campaigns. Contributor information on a campaign finance report includes an individual's name and home address and in certain cases, employer and occupation information.

The legislation prevents contributor information from being used for commercial solicitations, including the publication of this information through an intermediary media outlet if the sole intent and purpose of publication was to circumvent the commercial solicitation prohibition. Contributor information can be used for electoral and educational purposes and by the media for purposes other than commercial solicitations.

Finally, the proposed legislation is modeled after federal law which has been in effect since 1976.

Contacts:

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**LINDA H. LAMONE, ADMINISTRATOR
STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

SBE Testimony - HB 529

EHEA 2/4/2022

SB 296 Senator Bryan Simonaire_FAV.pdf

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Chair, Alcohol

Health

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
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The Senate of Maryland
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Written Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 296

Chairman and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, I am here to introduce and voice my support for Senate Bill 296 – *Election Law – Campaign Finance – Protection of Contributor Information*.

Senate Bill 296 would prohibit a person from using contributor information from any report or statement required under provisions of law governing campaign finance for commercial solicitation purposes. It would also prohibit a person from publishing contributor information from any report or statement required under provisions of law governing campaign finance in newspapers, magazines, books, or other similar media for the purpose of facilitating commercial solicitation.